



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

M. JODI RELL  
GOVERNOR

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## **Governor Rell Seeks Presidential Disaster Declaration, Federal Aid for March Storms**

*Governor Tells President Additional Aid Requests May Be Forthcoming*

Governor M. Jodi Rell today announced that she has written President Obama to formally request a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration – a move that will bring federal financial aid to state government and to Connecticut cities and towns whose budgets were battered by severe storms in March.

Governor Rell's letter was sent after the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the state Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) confirmed losses and expenses in Fairfield and New London counties from the storms of March 12-14 and March 29-30 met the threshold for "Public Assistance" (PA). An initial survey found public sector costs in those two counties of at least \$11 million.

The Governor said the request may be updated soon to include additional counties – such as Middlesex and Windham – and additional programs, such as "Individual Assistance" (IA), which provides financial assistance to eligible individuals and households who have uninsured losses from a major disaster. Individual losses are still being tallied by FEMA and DEMHS and final figures should be ready shortly.

"The March storms not only delivered a staggering blow from nature, they took a colossal toll on the financial resources of state and local governments," Governor Rell said. "High winds, heavy rains, uprooted trees, power outages and flooding did tremendous damage to homes, roads and bridges. Police officers, firefighters, public works crews and others spent countless hours trying to keep residents safe. And once the skies cleared and the water receded, more time and money were needed to clear debris, pump out basements and return life to some semblance of normal.

"Taxpayers cannot bear these costs – especially not in these still-stressful economic times," the Governor said. "My top priority right now is to provide all of the assistance we possibly can to everyone who has been affected by these storms. I am confident that the White House will move quickly on my letter."

Governor Rell noted that FEMA, DEMHS and the National Weather Service are treating the storms as a single, related weather event because the heavy rains of March 12-14 left the ground so saturated and the state's rivers so high that the subsequent rains caused severe – even record-breaking – flooding.

“In the wake of the storms we have created an unprecedented low-interest state loan program to help people make urgent structural repairs and replace critical appliances such as furnaces and water heaters,” the Governor said. “We have also provided local governments with information about financing for emergency repairs to essential infrastructure such as roads and bridges. In addition, state agencies such as the Department of Insurance and the Department of Economic and Community Development are working with consumers and businesses to help everyone get back on their feet. Connecticut always comes together in a crisis – and this is no exception.”

Information on the state's low-interest loan program can be found on the Connecticut Housing Investment Fund (CHIF) Web site at [www.chif.org](http://www.chif.org). The loans, offered at an interest rate of 2 percent, will cover the repair of damage to basements, foundations, roofs and insulation and the purchase of critical appliances such as furnaces and hot water heaters that were damaged from basement flooding.

The loans include maximum limits of:

- \$20,000 for structural repair
- \$750 for hot water heaters
- \$7,000 for furnaces

Cities and towns where the flood damaged critical roads and bridges can contact the Office of Policy and Management – the Governor's budget agency – to inquire about funding from the Department of Transportation's Town Aid-Emergency Relief Fund.

The fund, created in the late 1970s, was set up to hold any left over money from the appropriations for annual state aid to communities for roads, bridges and dams. Under the rules of the fund, a mayor or first selectman can apply to the Governor for aid to help defray the costs of repairs after a natural disaster.

Low-interest federal disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) are also available to eastern Connecticut small businesses affected by the flooding. The application deadline is December 19, 2010. Applications can be obtained by calling the SBA Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955. The application can also be completed on line at <http://www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance>.